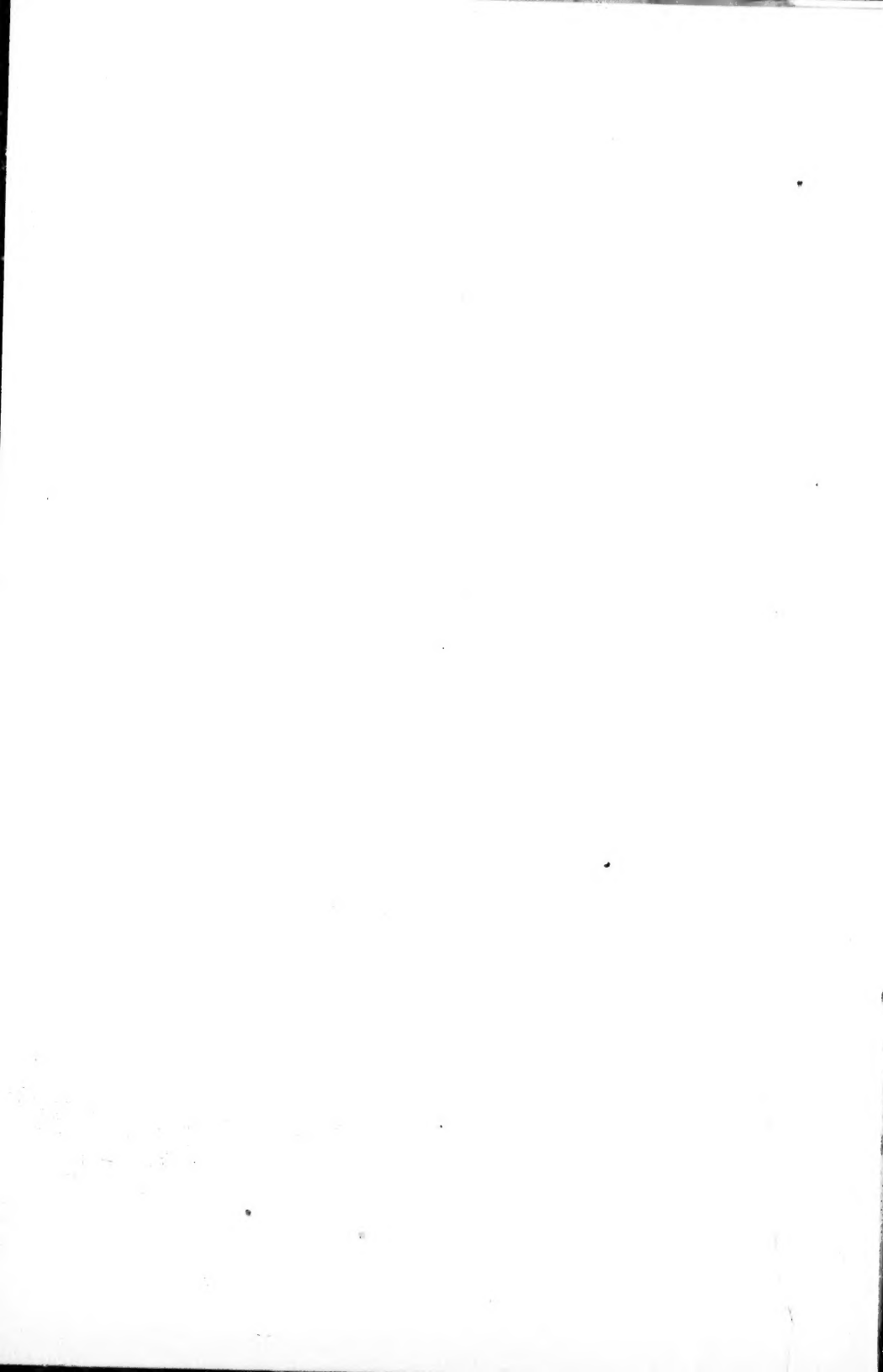




T
THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

AND

MODERN THOUGHT

Higher Criticism

BY

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PREFACE.

THE following pages contain the second of two lectures on "The Christian Ministry and Modern Thought," delivered at the Alumni Conference of Knox College (1896). A number of those who heard it desired its publication as a short, clear statement of the problem of "Higher Criticism." It was accordingly given to the press, but as I have been since repeatedly urged to put it in a more convenient and permanent form, it is herewith sent to the public, with all its imperfections on its head, in the shape of a pamphlet. No one will expect from it, therefore, what it does not profess to be. It will not take the place of a wider and minuter study of the subject, but if it prove helpful to anyone perplexed in the mazes of this burning question, I shall not regret the publicity given to a production prepared for oral delivery rather than the printed page.

W. D. A.



HIGHER CRITICISM.

CHRISTIANITY has well-nigh absorbed all that is of philosophical value in evolution.* It at least takes the friendly help of this principle to guide it in not a few of its inquiries and perplexities. But there has appeared on the stage another disturber of the theological peace, and a very persistent and troublesome one. It is the aspect of modern thought towards the Bible.

Higher Criticism is the battle cry of the theological war that is now upon us. No rest for the theologian. It is well there should not be. He might "stagnate in the weeds of sloth," if not aroused by attacks upon his ancient towers. Controversy has its evils—but better controversy far than the peace of indifference.

Now, the course of the theological professor is clear. It is his business to deal with these questions as they rise. But what shall the mere pastor do? I wish to speak from his standpoint. He has

* Evolution was dealt with in a previous lecture.

a different vocation and a different audience, and in regard to such questions as modern Biblical criticism he is often perplexed as to what he should do.

The Christian minister pursuing his ordinary work may reason: "I shall not trouble myself or my people about this great critical controversy. I shall just bide my time, and when these great scholars have finished their work and settled the controversy, I shall step in and take the side that wins as the right side." But what if neither side should win a positive victory? And what if the whole subject should be sprung upon him in public, and he have nothing to say or begin to talk ignorantly, and, as a teacher and a leader, with shame he takes a lower seat in public esteem, his influence and the cause of religion wounded because—to use a common phrase—he was "not up" in these things? And what, again, if one of our professors should get a little off the track and the whole mass of critical questions be suddenly thrown into the General Assembly? Such a thing might happen any day. It is not so long ago since the temper and disposition of our Assembly was shown in regard to this matter. Was our Assembly intelligently prepared for a discussion that then seemed so imminent? I frankly avow for myself I do not think it was. Well, what then? Out of mental and moral self-respect, out of regard for the exigencies of pastoral life, and as a duty incumbent upon him as a member of church courts, the Christian min-

ister should have a clear knowledge of the many points of the modern Biblical controversy.

Now it has become a serious question, How shall we ministers deal with this subject in our pulpits and pastoral work? Some would tell us, "Oh, preach the Gospel and never mention it." I hold that this seemingly good policy is not wise. The subject has left the study of the specialist. Through the press and platform, even when the pulpit is silent, it has come to the knowledge of our ordinary church members. They think something is being done with the Bible behind their backs. They will be glad to hear from us in some way what it is. They will be glad to know that they can still read their Bibles as the Word of God. They will be glad to have a word given them to reply to those who taunt them, "Where is now your Bible?"

Just at the time I was preparing this lecture, there appeared in one of the papers of my city—a paper that comes into more than one-half the homes of my congregation—a leading article, headed "Criticism of the Bible." It started out by quoting from a distinguished Canon of the English Church a statement that the increase of scientific knowledge had deprived parts of the Bible of the historical value that was generally attributed to them by our forefathers. It then referred to an article in the *North American Review*, by Goldwin Smith, in which that gentle-

man in his own trenchant way speaks of the Old Testament as "the millstone tied about the neck of Christianity." After referring to Ingersoll and the Campbell case, the article insidiously suggests the rejection of the Bible as a Divine revelation advises preachers to preach the teachings of Christ which it defines as truth, love of humanity, neighborliness, unselfishness, etc., and ends with a quotation from Ian Maclaren which the writer evidently did not understand. The aim of the whole article was to sap the foundations of the Bible as a supernatural revelation. There is not a pastor who could not give similar instances. I refer to this to show that if we pastors do not present to our people in a wise and truthful way the truth of modern criticism and its probable effects, our people will get it from other sources in a false exaggerated and damaging aspect.

It will never do to have fears for the Bible. It has stood all assaults. It has gone through many fiery trials. It will go through this.

It will not do, either, to meet argument by mere dogmatism. Who will say nay, if the critic demands the Bible to be submitted to him like any other ancient book? Who will say him nay, if he bring to bear upon it the widest scholarship and the keenest research in determining its authorship and literary merits? We may object when we see a critic evidently start with the foregone conclusion "it is like any other book," and seem bound, by some process or other, to bring in a verdict to suit

Someone has said that definition before discussion is as necessary as diagnosis before prescription. In this address I shall seek to define, and to define in such a way as to make the subject clear as a popular statement of the case.

So far as Higher Criticism is concerned I shall not be expected to deal with every theory or with any exhaustively. I intend to deal with results, and with these results, as embodied in the theory at present, the popular one with the critics—the hypothesis of Graf, followed by Keunen, Wellhausen, Robertson Smith, etc.

In a general way it may be stated that the modern controversy centres in the question, How shall we regard the history of the people of Israel? From what standpoint shall we view it? The controversy has been well styled “the battle of the standpoints.”

We shall briefly define the two standpoints: (1) The traditional and (2) the critical.

(1) As we read our Old Testaments we saw, or at least we thought we saw, a gradual development of God's dealing with the nation. The Patriarchal, the Law-giving, the Prophetical, all seemed to follow one another in due course and proper order. And more, we saw in it all a beautiful and necessary preparation for Christ, the crown of all and the summit of God's grace to sinning man. This scheme of history seemed so consistent that though read and studied through centuries by thousands

of the keenest minds, no other was thought of. We accepted the Divine call to Abraham as the legitimate beginning. We followed with fascinated delight the histories of the patriarchs. We went down with Jacob and his sons to Egypt and sojourned there. We followed with wonder the marvellous story of the exodus and the journeyings in the desert. The thunders of Sinai were real to us, and so was the legislation of Moses. We followed the history of the conquest of Canaan and the settlement of the tribes, the sad story of the declension and backsliding of Israel, the judges raised up for their deliverance, the prophets sent to rebuke, teach, exhort, encourage and guide. We were carried away by the tragic story of the captivity and return. And then, through the four hundred years of silence, we looked on to Christ. This we accepted as the outline of the history of Israel, and, whether this scheme of history be true, or whether it be, as the critics tell us, manipulated history, it is unquestionably the theory of the Bible writers themselves, the theory accepted by Christ, the theory accepted by the apostles, the theory accepted by the Church almost without suspicion until recently. This is the traditional standpoint.

(2) Within this wonderful nineteenth century men have risen up of unquestionable scholarship, and many of them men of candor and character. They say this theory of the history of Israel is all wrong.

They submit the books to closest scrutiny, and from them proceed to determine matters as to the dates and circumstances of their composition. They find different documents in the Pentateuch. They discern different codes which they assign to different dates, and these dates far apart. They proceed to frame a history from a new standpoint—the naturalistic. These Hebrews, they say, were simply wandering tribes who came up from the desert and settled in the land of Canaan. They brought with them their God Jahaveh. As the god Chemosh was to the Moabites, or Melcom to the Ammonites, so Jahaveh was to the Hebrews. They had their own traditions about their God Jahaveh, and in course of time they assimilated much from the religious customs and notions of the Canaanites among whom they dwelt.

As time went on these legends and myths became to them history, and customs developed into laws.

In the eighth century before Christ, when, according to the theory, we have the first authentic writings, this people were still worshipping their God with traditional rites. Then the Prophets arose. Everything depends on the Prophets. They brought about a wonderful change. They purified the religious conceptions of worship, and brought in the higher ideal of ethical monotheism. This new ideal came in conflict with the national traditions, and these were changed to fit into them.

Now comes in the process by which our Old

Testament was brought into its present form. We can see the task of the critic. By the analytic process critics have disclosed three strata of writings in the Pentateuch--the three codes. These after being from time to time revised and re-edited were skilfully combined in the form in which we now have them. Their order as agreed upon to suit the theory is: (1) Code of the Covenant. (2) Deuteronomic Code. (3) Levitical Code. The Code of the Covenant has a basis of Mosaic tradition, but could not have been composed before 850 B.C. The Deuteronomic Code was compiled in the days of Josiah by some unknown author. It was the Book of the Law presented to Josiah by Shaphan the scribe found by Helkiah in the Temple. The date assigned to it is 621 B.C. It was simply ascribed to Moses, they say, to give it greater sanction. The Levitical Code was compiled in the days of the Exile, and framed in the interest of the priesthood and ritual. The date assigned to it is 444 B.C. So then, according to this theory, instead of the Law and the Prophets, we should have the Prophets and the Law. Out of the Prophets came the Law, and the development of the Law gave the Levitical Code.

From this standpoint Judges, Samuel, Kings are remodelled history—pictures repainted to fit into the prophetic or priestly standpoints. The prophets used history as a vehicle for their own ideas as preachers and reformers. Predictions are

but shrewd anticipations of events, according to their idea of the providence of God. The Book of Chronicles is looked upon with special suspicion as history tinkered to sustain the priestly-Levitical theory as to the setting apart of the tribe of Levi. The stories of the patriarchs are not veritable history. Some of the critics at least see in them only "free creations of unconscious art," "the fruit of late Jewish fancy."

There are many modifications, but, without entering into the specific shades of view of different men, I think I have fairly stated the general standpoint of the Higher Criticism of the present day. In outline the two theories are now before us.

CAUTIONS, COMPARISONS, AND CRITICISMS.

I am not going to boast of extensive reading in critical literature, but I have read, and read carefully enough to satisfy my own mind as to the spirit and conclusions of Higher Criticism. I confess that modern critical productions are to myself painful reading. My feeling is that if the traditional theory is a confusion and a mistake, if the earliest books of the Bible are the latest and the latest the earliest, if the facts of Bible history which for generations have taught us Divine truth more powerfully than words, are in a great measure but legends or mythical embodiments of these truths, then the picture of God's dealing with men in the Old Testament, a picture which genera-

tions have gazed upon with delight and wonder, is not history at all. However beautiful it is, and however much we may admire and reverence it, it is not true. The development of the Old Testament is not a development of real life. It is the development of the stage—the men and women merely players.

But, whilst I presume we all approach the subject with this feeling of pain and reluctance, it will be rightly expected from us as lovers of the truth and as teachers of the truth that we keep our minds frankly open to the truth, and that we avoid as far as possible the blinding influences of prejudice.

Now, it would certainly be prejudice in us and mental dishonesty to take sides against the views of this modern analytical school without an examination of them.

It would be prejudice not to acknowledge the blessing they have brought to the Church in imparting a fresh and living interest to the study of the Bible, and in bringing new light to bear on its interpretation. We can accept much that they have done without accepting their theory, a theory which has been aptly described as “evolutionary in its principles and revolutionary in its results.”

It is not prejudice for us to hasten slowly—very slowly; and, although our Higher Critics may put on grand airs and tell us their theory is now established in the minds of all who are competent

to judge, to grant them nothing further than the old Scotch verdict "Not proven."

It is not prejudice to hold by the established theory until it is disproven and displaced.

Even when they bring us facts that induce us to modify our views on some points, we must not forget that a modification of the old differs widely from the adoption of the new. If we hold to the old, even with modifications, we may be disparagingly called "traditionalists"; but we need not blush.

Are not many men to-day accepting the new view traditionally, accepting it and proclaiming it not because examined and found true, not because it is supposed that great Hebraists competent to judge have decided the matter beyond dispute? As Andrew Lang has finely said, "There are many who disbelieve in authority, but do believe in authorities."

For myself I always watch suspiciously a specialist with a theory.

But here the mighty hand of the specialist is raised, and waves us ordinary ministers off the ground altogether. We are told that none can enter here but the specialist, the Hebraist, the critic. They would have us believe that these men by education and training have developed a kind of supernatural sense for discerning documents and tracing fragments of literature, and that without this our judgments are vain.

I want to stand here with the rest of my brethren and refuse to be so majestically dismissed. We cannot, it is true, all be specialists in linguistics or in "stylistics." We have not time for this; but we may with moderate diligence learn enough to be able to appreciate the argument of the specialist. We may not be able to do what a Kuenen, a Wellhausen, or a Robertson Smith has done in linguistic and critical examination of Old Testament literature. To these men with their vast learning the work they have gone through has been most laborious, and the process of investigation tedious and painful. We may not be able even to follow them in all their minutiae. But now that the results of their great labors are before us, with moderate learning and good sense I claim we can estimate the value of these results; but further, and what is of more importance, with all the facts before us I think we can come to some conclusion as to the validity of their underlying hypothesis.

And further still, not only we Christian ministers, but the intelligent members of our churches must come to a conclusion on this theory, for, is it not evident, that whatever view prevails it must be one that will commend itself to the good judgment of all reflecting Christian people? The critics disclaim the judgment of the people on their work. I have indicated a sense in which they are right in this. But, if their Bible be one for specialists only to interpret, and not to be put into the hands of the common people, they take a leaf out of the Roman-

ist's book in holding that the laity cannot read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

Now, I would like to put my finger on the spot where I think a real danger lurks in Higher Criticism.

Truth should not be, and is not, in danger from the Higher Criticism that takes the literature of the Old Testament as it stands and submits it to a thorough-going literary analysis. This should and must serve the interests of truth, and we must never forget that the truth, whatever it is, will yield a better moral result than any lie or any error however sacred.

But there is danger to the truth when attempts are made to use this analysis as a basis for a purely naturalistic development of Bible history, with an apparent determination to stretch the facts of the Bible on the Procrustean bed of such a theory. It is wonderful how even the fairest of the men who hold this theory will say to us, "It is perfectly clear," concerning some conclusions needful for their theory, when the clearness is not apparent, and will strike out a passage of Scripture as an interpolation with but little reason if it stands in the way of their theory.

It must be fully admitted that there are difficulties in the way of the usually accepted theory. There always have been some apparent objections. The critics have raised many more. These objections of the critics must be acknowledged and met

as far as possible ; such objections, for example, as the following : The minute ritual in a desert legislation ; the absence of any record of the observance of the Mosaic law from the entrance into Canaan to the times of the earlier kings ; the late date of a central place of worship ; the anachronisms and contradictions which they point out in the Old Testament narratives ; variations and peculiarities of style in books by the same reputed author.

But, whilst we acknowledge these difficulties, we think that the difficulties besetting the modern theory are very much greater. Some of *these difficulties and inconsistencies* I shall proceed to point out, and state some reasons why the new theory should not be substituted for the old.

1. We can press the naturalness and simplicity of the traditional view as against a view of the Scriptures that is complex and dominated by a theory, namely, the theory that the records were framed for the purpose of establishing a priestly code and consolidating priestly authority.

2. We want further light on the great literary phenomenon of their composition according to the critical theory ;—some explanation of how such a vast mass of rewritten history and fabricated legislation could be crowded into the period of the Exile. The ingenuity of the modern school of critics is unquestionably very great, but it is nothing to the ingenuity and marvellous inventiveness they ascribe to the school of Ezra.

Take a simple point. According to the critics perhaps a score of writers, or more, were engaged in bringing the Pentateuch and histories into their present shape. How comes it then that writers, writing of times, say, eight hundred years in the past, make no mistakes in their descriptions of topography or of the habits and customs of the times of which they write? It is a literary miracle.

3. Again, as against their supposition of the non-literary character of the Mosaic age, we go to Tell-el-Amarna, and behold the bricks are there unto this day that tell us of the wonderful literary activity in Egypt before the exodus. Indeed, archæology is arraying a logic of facts that will apparently tumble down very much of the fabric erected on critical intuition.

Not only was Egypt, the land from which the Israelites went out, a literary land, but there is abundant evidence to show that this was true of the land to which they went; that reading and writing were well known to the Canaanites; that Kirjath-Sepher, or Book Town, was no anachronism. It was therefore quite possible for Moses to have written, in the main, what was ascribed to him, and quite probable that he did have much more to do with the composition of the Pentateuch than even moderate critics contend for, and quite probable that the historic records date much farther back than critics at present allow.

It does not seem to me to be common-sense to

reduce the legislation of Moses to a few primal principles and a few covenant obligations. Moses is altogether too large a figure to be crushed into such a small space.

The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, in a form better defined than heretofore, will likely stand the test of historic criticism. But we should have it clearly understood that we contend for the Mosaic legislation rather than for the Mosaic authorship. These records have on them an honest face, and we want good proof if they are charged with fraud. The real point, however, to be determined is this: Is the history true?

4. Again, we can bring the two theories together on common ground. We can test them as explanations of admitted facts, and ask which is the better? which is the more rational?

The critics admit Hosea and Amos to be genuine writings of their time—750 B.C. At that time, too, they acknowledged the existence of the Covenant Code; the stories of Elijah and Elisha; the stories of the patriarchs; Judges and Samuel (less additions).

Now, these writings as literature have to be accounted for. The critics, according to their theory, have to explain—and they have not done it—how a non-literary people became in an incredibly short time a literary people.

The writings of these prophets are remarkable productions of literature. The Book of Amos is,

according to the verdict of the best critics, in choice Hebrew and in exquisite literary style. What explanation can be given—and at the same time give the writers fair-play—of the religious consciousness and of the literary attainments of these writers? Surely there must have been long antecedent literary culture and long religious development, else how could Amos so write? and for what readers?

There is nothing, moreover, in these earlier prophets to hint that they are the originators of a new religious ideal or of new religious customs.

Look at this little Book of Amos. In it you do not find any suggestion as of a new religion springing out of old traditions. His appeal is for the old religion against modern sins and new errors; an appeal to religious and moral ideas presumed to be already grounded in the minds of his readers (*e.g.*, Is it not so, O house of Israel? ii. 11); an appeal to the fact of a line of prophets who had taught and protested in the past. Surely Amos knew where he got, and where Israel got, their religious ideas, knew better than any critics in the nineteenth century can tell him.

5. I would like further light on a few things. I would like more light on the assumed fact that the religion of Israel for centuries continued to be as one of the other religions of the earth in a low, animistic, unethical form, and then so rapidly developed into the pure ethical monotheism of the

prophets. I would so like a little explanation of this subtle process by which semi-heathenish Israel absorbed heathenish material from the nations round about, and transmuted it into a higher spiritual religion.

I would like to know, further, how it comes that both Deuteronomy and the Levitical Code contain the laws that have reference to the desert life. If these laws existed, where were they kept during this long period? If they did not exist, how came they into codes written so long after?

I should like to know how it happens that the Deuteronomic Code which was, according to the critics, introduced to centralize worship at the temple, is so comparatively barren in ritual, the thing most needed in the temple service, whilst the Levitical Code drawn up during the Exile when the temple lay in ruins is full to repletion with ritualistic details.

I should like much more light than they give us as to the source of the ceremonial and the ritual. I should like some explanation of this more clear and consistent than "the codification of a *praxis*," and "the programme of the priests."

6. I look at the great outstanding facts in the sacred writings, the nation's testimony to its earlier history; the ethical monotheism throughout; the place of Moses and his legislation; the prophets in their work and national import, and I ask, can the

critic deal honestly with the literature and do historical justice to these?

For my part I think they fail sadly here. I take then the admitted facts of history, and I find the theory of the Biblical writers fits into its general trend naturally; the modern theory does not. I take abiding effects that must be accounted for. The Biblical theory accounts for them; the modern does not. I take the Jew with the Talmud and his traditions. The Bible theory accounts for him; the modern does not.

I take the New Testament, Christ and His teachings, the apostles and their teachings. The Biblical theory harmonizes with them; the modern does not.

Now, with all these, to me apparently insuperable objections, and others I have not time to mention, I see no other course than to reject the new theory until it shows far better reasons than it has shown for displacing the old.

But rejecting the theory does not preclude us from assimilating much of the light critics have thrown upon the Bible.

We may feel that if the laws are not by Moses, the history ascribing them to him is a fraud; but, if the laws are by Moses, we may allow revisions and emendations, and still have veritable history. Bishop Ellicott's view will cover the ground and give a line of explanation that will meet many of the difficulties: "The historical books as we have

them bear unmistakable marks of the work of having passed through the hands, not only of earlier compilers, but of later editors and revisers, numerous notes, archæological and explanatory, some obviously of an earlier and some of a later date, being found in all the books, but particularly in the more ancient."

It will be a long time yet before the last word is spoken on the details of this subject. In the meantime let us be sure of this, that criticism cannot destroy the abiding Word of God. The power of God has been in and with His Word in the past. The power is very manifest in the present day, and will continue to the end. If new facts are brought to light, let us honestly receive them and wisely adjust our view of the Bible to the facts.

At present there is considerable chaos reigning in Old Testament criticism, and the critics, whose process is too largely subjective, are asking us to build too much on their intuition, an intuition which in the nature of the case is changeful. We may rest assured that that view of the Bible will finally be adopted which is historically true.

This modern view is not propagated by those who hate the Word, but by many who at least profess to revere it. Still the religious element has been left hitherto too much in the background by the critics. I feel that criticism is too scientifically cold. We wait for some man of large erudition in full sympathy with the great throbbing heart of

the Bible, and living in the stream of a warm Christian life, to tell us the real meaning and value of this great movement.

In the meantime modern criticism is affecting everything with which the Bible is specially identified, and in what remains of this lecture, I shall proceed to indicate how it has affected (1) the Doctrine of Inspiration, (2) Theology, (3) Comparative Religion.

(1) INSPIRATION.

That the modern theory of Higher Criticism, as well as the trend of all modern Biblical criticism, should affect the doctrine of Inspiration, is to be expected. It will not, however, as free thinkers are fond of averring, do away with it altogether. "Every Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for doctrine," etc., will stand. Some of the critics speak as if their views would not affect the doctrine of Inspiration at all, but when they speak in this way we feel tempted to ask them to define what they mean by inspiration. Indeed, the Church is waiting for its teachers to speak a strong, sure word on this question of the Inspiration of the Bible. We would like so much a definition that would cover all the facts of the case. With the exception of those who have adopted an extreme naturalistic theory of the origin of the Bible, it is admitted by all that the Scriptures are a divine-human product. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the

Holy Ghost." But to what extent were these holy men controlled by the Divine Spirit? To what extent was the truth influenced by the human medium through which it passed? This is the crucial question. This is the great battle-ground of debate to-day. As might be expected modern criticism emphasizes the human element, and certainly does not look with favor upon any theory of inspiration that would pronounce the Scriptures inerrant. The disposition to minimize the Divine element in inspiration is more dangerous to truth than the disposition to minimize the human, but both extremes should be avoided. It is clear that the true view must give to both elements their proper weight.

There is a theory of Inspiration once almost universally held in our Church, and still revered, a theory quite recently brought prominently under your notice by a Princeton professor (Prof. Warfield), one of its most distinguished advocates. According to this theory you ask the Scriptures themselves how they are inspired, and they are interpreted as answering in the words, "plenary," "infallible," "inerrant." When pressed by the question, what about the discrepancies and errors found in the documents, the advocates of this theory reply, "These are not so numerous as some allege. They refer only to the *minima* and trivialities of Scripture. With fuller light and reference to the original autographs they would vanish altogether."

"But," reply the advocates of another and freer

theory, one perhaps more in sympathy with the spirit of modern criticism, "no living man has seen or is likely to see these autographs. The autographs are myths. The oldest manuscript does not date farther back than the tenth century. Further, your *a priori* theory of absolute inerrancy and faultless perfection has led to wrong views of the Bible and to some strange mistakes. Were there not those who, holding that the Bible must be perfect in every respect, contended that its Greek must be pure Attic Greek? God would have used no other. But investigation soon proved that it was not pure Attic Greek. Again, did this theory not lead some men of great piety and learning (the Buxtorfs) to maintain that the Hebrew vowel points were inspired? And this view was even incorporated in the Helvetic confession. But the historic fact is that these points were inserted at a comparatively late date. There are many facts in the Bible which this theory cannot cover. Be careful, therefore, you do not postulate a theory that facts will compel you to disclaim. It is dangerous to postulate necessary inerrancy in regard to minor matters of history, science, etc.

These men, and they constitute perhaps the majority of learned divines to-day, hold a theory of inspiration giving more freedom to the human element. The Divine inspiration and superintendence do not extend to the point of securing inerrancy in every particular. Or, as one of their number states the position, they hold "inerrancy of revelation but

not inerrancy of inspiration." I am including here only those who with admitted candor and piety seek to maintain the Bible as the authoritative, divinely-inspired Word of God.

Thus over against the view that most of us were grounded in as students, the view of which Hodge and Warfield are accepted as the modern champions, you have this one held by German theologians (evangelical), by most English theologians, by the Scotch theologians, Bruce, Dods, Davidson, Denny, Lindsay, etc., a view held by the reformers Calvin and Luther, although both sides claim these.

Time would not permit, nor would it be expected that I should discuss in this lecture the merits of these two theories.

But the question is, "What should be the position of the Christian minister with regard to this vexed question? Which view shall he hold?" He cannot hold both. But it is, I think, evident that he must be allowed to hold either. To one man the former view seems dangerous, intolerable, impossible. To another the latter seems the giving up of revelation altogether. It will be admitted by all that the trend of modern thought, the very atmosphere of modern thinking, is favorable to the freer view. Both views I presume must be tolerated—are tolerated—within the Church. True believers and good thinkers may hold different views. Our Church does not define and demand any particular view of inspiration. On one point

only she insists, an inspiration that will maintain the integrity and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. The point to be carefully determined is what a man must necessarily hold in order really to believe in an inspired, authoritative revelation from God.

It may not be necessary for the minister to set forth before his people various views of inspiration. It seems to me that the wisest course to pursue is to follow the lines of our article in the Confession of Faith which expounds no theory of inspiration, but after declaring that the Scriptures are "inspired to be the rule of faith and life," proceeds to give most cogent reasons for their authority. I conceive our best service to the Bible will be rendered, not in discussing theories of inspiration, but in setting the Scriptures forward in their "incomparable excellencies," so that they shall vindicate for themselves their inspiration and their Divine authority.

The discussion is not completed. No definition of inspiration has yet been given that relieves all the difficulties of the case. The time for this is not yet come, if it ever come. It is evident that it has not pleased God to give us a canon of Scriptures so defined and inspired that there shall be no difficulty or dispute. Rather, it has pleased Him that from time to time the Scriptures should be thrown into the crucible of controversy that they may live more fully in men's minds, and that the adhering dross of human misconception may be purged away. The

present breezes of criticism will only blow away the chaff, not the wheat. Let us then keep bright and clear before our people the proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures. Let us teach them as revealing God in Christ Jesus. Let us so unfold them that the manifest presence of God shall be felt in them, and we shall have done our best both to meet the wants of the inquiring doubters, and to freshen the faith of believers who have already found in them spirit, and light, and life.

(2) THEOLOGY.

Modern criticism, as might be expected, is exerting a considerable influence on the Theology of to-day. We have no reason to fear that any legitimate interpretation of the Bible will ever seriously affect the great accepted doctrines of the Church.

A change, however, is apparent. Dogmatic Theology is being set in the background. Biblical Theology is in the ascendant. It is receiving attention from the highest minds.

Another fact of significance is that at present the only recognized school of Theology in Germany is the Ritschlian, which, while treating Scripture from the critical standpoint, and looking especially to the mind and teaching of Christ as the source of doctrine, gives great prominence to the Christian consciousness, and professes to set aside all philosophizing and scholasticism or systematizing in theology.

The objection to this Theology may be stated in a single sentence. By its principle of estimating truth by the "value-judgments" of Christian consciousness, it gives play to a free and uncertain interpretation of Scripture, an interpretation that fails to recognize the uniformly accepted doctrines of the Word as to the character of God, the nature of sin, the divinity of Christ, the work of redemption; and by attempting to set aside all philosophizing it ignores a plain demand of human reason.

We hear much to-day of the decay of Dogmatics. We are told that "Systematic Theology is dead" Surely this is short-sighted. The great *scientia scientiarum* cannot die. In past forms and in present forms it may have many defects. Great truths are being thrown into the sunlight. Changes of form will take place. But there is a grand time coming for the Systematic Theologian. Criticism will have its day and cease to reign. In the providence of God some great theologic mind will be born in the Church who will take a deeper, wider view than any heretofore, who will relate the new to the old and harmonize and revivify the whole.

(3) COMPARATIVE RELIGION.

It is only in the briefest manner possible, and therefore very imperfectly, that I can refer to another important subject that I have indicated as connected with my theme—the relation of Modern Criticism to Comparative Religion.

The tendency here is to place the Christian religion on a level with other religions by the application of the principle of natural development. The Bible must be placed on a level with other sacred books. Christianity becomes one of many religions. The recent Parliament of Religions has done much to give prominence to this subject. No one will deny that great advantages must flow from the study of the religions of the world. It tends to bring into prominence the universal religious nature of man. It brings into clearer light the world's need of the religion of Christ. It helps us to a truer conception of what Christianity is. It brings us near to the heart of humanity in its great spiritual questionings, and stirs up an intelligent missionary zeal. No theological curriculum is complete that does not give prominence to this subject. But the Christian minister must exercise great judgment, must not be led aside by illusions on this somewhat fascinating study, and must see clearly the points at issue when comparison is made between ethnic religions and Christianity, between the Bible and other sacred books. Christianity must not be asked to take her seat as one of many religions.

We have had lectures in elegant terms setting forth the praises of Hinduism. We have choice quotations from the Eastern sacred books presented to us with the query, Are not these as good as your Bible? I was once tempted by these quota-

tions to purchase a set of the translations of the Sacred Books of the East, but was sorely disappointed on finding that the quotations made were but a few grains of wheat out of heaps of chaff and worse. One test then I would propose. Go into a library and spend even two days looking through these Sacred Books of the East, and you will never after think them worthy to be named with the Bible—and their worst parts are not translated. I believe in this comparative study of religions; but I believe Christianity is the one absolute, supreme, universal religion, and my feeling is that the man who will consent to put Christianity on a level with other religions, even in thought, has dethroned and degraded her. Christianity in its very spirit is charity. But here she must be intolerant. Christ is not to sit side by side with Buddha or any other religious reformer. For Him the place is supremacy. Is Jesus Christ Divine? Is He the only begotten Son of God? Is He the one Saviour of the world? Is the religion He founded the one true religion? Or, is He one of many Saviours? and Christianity one of many tolerated religions? I ask this question simply because it indicates, it seems to me, where only we can stand as Christians, and warn us against a false liberalism.

CONCLUDING COUNSELS.

In conclusion, I come back to our responsible position as Christian ministers in relation to the modern thought which I have indicated as assuredly permeating the communities in the midst of which we preach.

Permit me to suggest the following counsels:

1. The Christian minister should be a *watchman*, wide-awake to discern the thinkings and questionings of those with whom he deals. He may take it for granted that whatever is affecting the community in general is affecting his own people, whether it be discussions on the Bible or on Evolution, on Education or Socialism, on Christian Science or Sinless Perfection. It would be a revelation to most of us ministers if we knew exactly what our people did think about such things. Satan, at all events, is very wary, and seeks to turn the thought that is agitating men's minds to his own advantage.

From his watch-tower the minister looks forth and warns against the coming enemy—not only warns, but organizes forces to resist and overcome.

The enemies of religion to-day are not persecution, oppression, fire, and sword, but the subtle enemies of the brain that beguile and tempt the soul from Christ and truth. The Christian minister cannot sleep and dream. His mind must be alert, watch-

ful, adaptive. If any error arise he must promptly, wisely, apply the antidote of spiritual truth.

The truth as it is in Jesus has in itself all that is needed for its defence against error; but let this truth be aimed straight at the target. Its power is largely lost by indefinite, promiscuous, aimless firing.

2. The Christian minister should give to the religious questions that are the living, burning questions of the day as *fair and honest investigation* as he can. In this way he will not be taken unawares. He will not take sides ignorantly, and he will be able to help puzzled inquirers.

If the busy pastor should say, "I have no time to read up these subjects," we answer that it is too true that the minister has not time to do all the things he would. But if on his study table, alongside of the Bible, there lies a good solid book on one of these living questions, and he take it up at odd half-hours practically wasted on ephemeral literature, he will be surprised how much he can do, and yet not invade the time set apart for pulpit or pastoral duty.

3. The Christian minister should be *conservative towards old beliefs, but without prejudice towards that which is new.*

Let me define the kind of conservatism that should be prized and cultivated.

The conservatism desiderated is a conservatism born, not of ignorance, nor of obstinacy, not of

self-interest, nor of ungrounded prejudice, but born of profound reverence for the great truths with which we deal; a conservatism into which many of us have been trained in college, as students of the oracles of God and of theology; a conservatism that gladly recognizes itself the honored and grateful heir of all the knowledge of ages past; a conservatism that is almost the necessary attitude of men who feel their responsibility to God and to the Church as teachers and defenders of sacred truth; a conservatism that, strong in its love for and faith in the truth, will prove all things, and, whilst holding fast that which is good, will courageously cast the bad away; a conservatism at once eager for genuine progress, patient in research, sound in judgment, firm in conviction, and unfalteringly loyal to truth, wherever it may lead.

4. The Christian minister should exercise *a wise toleration* in regard to questions where a difference of view is possible among men equally learned and good. The argument advanced in my lecture, in reference to the two great views of inspiration held by respected teachers within our Church, is a plea for such toleration, and illustrates what I mean.

Let there be no mistake as to what we do mean by toleration. There is a toleration to be execrated as disloyalty to truth, and there is a toleration to be extolled as the embodiment of "holding the truth in love." Toleration is not an easy-going indifference that refuses to go to an extreme on any point.

Truth is not, as some seem to think, the golden mean between two extremes. It may be one extreme or the other.

Toleration is not a lack of firm and formulated conviction. Nay, I hold that the mind that is honestly and independently convinced is the very mind that will allow the possibility that other minds may be honestly convinced in a different view.

Furthermore, a true toleration will be wise enough not to load down faith with unnecessary details, or to blend the essential and the unessential in the same fate.

5. The Christian minister should cherish a *faith in Divine truth that is absolutely fearless*. *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit*. The faith that will not face inquiry, yea, the faith that will not challenge inquiry, is not true Protestant faith—not Presbyterian, anyway.

These stiff breezes of criticism that are blowing over the Bible, over old and cherished theories and interpretations, will not alarm true faith. Some harm may come. Weak faith will be sorely tried, but the end will be good. Chaff will be blown away. The wheat will remain, all the brighter and cleaner for the process. Therefore let these breezes blow on until their work is done.

6. The Christian minister should seek to create and maintain an *atmosphere of public opinion* in which faith in Jesus Christ and in the Gospel veri-

ties we preach will be easy. Atmospheres hostile to faith are prevalent. The study of "psychological climates" is an important one for the preacher. I cannot stay to develop this thought, but if you have ever preached in a sceptical neighborhood you will understand what I mean. Your words seem to strike a stone wall instead of human hearts. Or you will understand it if you have ever preached to a congregation whose minds were crammed with prejudice, or twisted by some popular error so that your words were misunderstood, twisted and distorted by the perverse interpretations of your hearers. Therefore it is our evident duty, by means of the pulpit, the press, the platform, in our homes, our schools, our colleges, everywhere and in every way, to seek to maintain in the community a "psychological climate" in which faith will be easy.

7. The Christian minister, as far as ability and circumstances will permit, should assume the part of *pronounced leadership* in all moral and religious matters.

If unbelief leads in science, it will lead science to the support of unbelief. If faith leads, she will lead science to the support of faith. The Christian ministry should, therefore, be to the front—should seek to guide all mental, moral, and spiritual movements.

Moreover, if this leadership is watchful, it will become increasingly aware of the vast extent of the field, and will recognize the fact, so finely stated

by Balfour, that "many of the decisive battles of theology are fought beyond its frontiers."

Finally, let us never be cast down. We do not go forth to "succor a distressed faith." Christianity is not in a state of siege. Christianity is not retreating before the foe. Christianity is in the field marching, armed, aggressive.

Let us rejoice in the mental activity into which we are born, and let us rejoice, also, that in spite of much doubt and unbelief, we have to-day a richer Bible and a more pre-eminent Christ than any age since the apostles' time.